

Framingham Podiatry

Notice of Privacy Practices

Effective: 4/11/03

THIS NOTICE DESCRIBES HOW MEDICAL INFORMATION ABOUT YOU MAY BE USED AND DISCLOSED AND HOW YOU CAN GET ACCESS TO THE INFORMATION.

PLEASE REVIEW THIS NOTICE CAREFULLY.

If you have any questions about this notice, please contact our privacy officer:

*Sue Mitchell, Office Manager
61 Lincoln Street, Suite 210
Framingham, MA 01702
(508) 872-9288*

1. Summary of Rights and Obligations Concerning Health Information

Framingham Podiatry is committed to preserving the privacy and confidentiality of your health information, which is required both by federal and state law, as well as by ethics of the medical profession. We are required by law to provide you with this notice of our legal duties, your rights, and our privacy practices, with respect to using and disclosing your health information that is created or retained by Framingham Podiatry.

Each time you visit us, we make a record of your visit. Typically, this record contains your symptoms, examination and test results, diagnoses, treatment, and a plan for future care or treatment. We have an ethical and legal obligation to protect the privacy of your health information, and we will only use or disclose this information in limited circumstances. In general, we may use and disclose your health information to:

- plan your care and treatment;
- provide treatment by us or others;
- communicate with other providers such as referring physicians;
- receive payment from you, your health plan, or your health insurer;
- make quality assessments and work to improve the care we render and the outcomes we achieve, known as health care operations;
- make you aware of services and treatments that may be of interest to you; and

- comply with state and federal laws that require us to disclose your health information.

We may also use or disclose your health information where you have authorized us to do so.

You have certain rights to your health information. You have the right to:

- ensure the accuracy of your health record;
- request confidential communications between you and your physician and request limits on the use and disclosure of your health information; and
- request an accounting of certain uses and disclosures of health information we have made about you.

We are required to:

- maintain the privacy of your health information;
- provide you with notice, such as this *Notice of Privacy Practices*, as to our legal duties and privacy practices with respect to information we collect and maintain about you;
- abide by the terms of our most current *Notice of Privacy Practices*;
- notify you if we are unable to agree to a requested restriction; and
- accommodate reasonable requests you may have to communicate health information by alternative means or at alternative locations.

We reserve the right to change our practices and to make the new provisions effective for all your health information that we maintain.

Should our information practices change, a revised *Notice of Privacy Practices* will be available upon request. If there is a material change, a revised *Notice of Privacy Practices* will be distributed to the extent required by law.

We will not use or disclose your health information with your authorization, except as described in our most current *Notice of Privacy Practices*.

In the following pages, we explain our privacy practices and your rights to your health information in more detail.

2. We May Use or Disclose Your Medical Information in the Following Ways

- A. Treatment:** We may use and disclose your medical information to provide you with medical treatment or services. For example, we may use your health information to write a prescription or to prescribe a course of treatment. We will record your current healthcare information in a record so, in the future, we can see your medical history to help in diagnosing and treatment, or to determine how well you are responding to treatment. We may provide your health information to other health providers, such as referring or specialist physicians, to assist in your treatment. Should you ever be hospitalized, we may

provide the hospital or its staff with the health information it requires to provide you with effective treatment.

- B. Payment:** We may use and disclose your health information so that we may bill and collect payment for the services that we provided to you. For example, we may contact your health insurer to verify your eligibility for benefits, and may need to disclose to it some details of your medical condition or expected course of treatment. We may use or disclose your information so that a bill may be sent to you, your health insurer, or a family member. The information on or accompanying the bill may include information that identifies you and your diagnosis, as well as services rendered, any procedures performed, and supplies used. Also, we may provide health information to another health care provider, such as an ambulance company that transported you to our office, to assist in their billing and collection efforts.
- C. Health Care Operations:** We may use and disclose your health information to assist in the operation of our practice. For example, members of our staff may use information in your health record to assess the care and outcomes in your case and others like it as part of a continuous effort to improve the quality and effectiveness of the healthcare and services we provide. We may use and disclose your health information to conduct cost-management and business planning activities for our practice. We may also provide such information to other health care entities for their health care operations. For example, we may provide information to your health insurer for its quality review purposes.
- D. Medical Residents and Medical Students:** Medical residents or medical students may observe or participate in your treatment or use your health information to assist in their training. You have the right to refuse to be examined, observed, or treated by medical residents or medical students.
- E. Business Associates:** Framingham Podiatry sometimes contracts with third-party business associates for services. Examples include answering services, transcriptionists, billing services, consultants, and legal counsel. We may disclose your health information to our business associates so that they can perform the job we have asked them to do. To protect your health information, however, we require our business associates to appropriately safeguard your information.
- F. Appointment Reminders:** We may use and disclose information in your medical record to contact you as a reminder that you have an appointment at Framingham Podiatry. We may call you at home the day before your appointment and leave a message for you on your answering machine or with an individual who responds to our telephone call. However, you may request that we provide such reminders only in a certain way or only at a certain place. We will endeavor to accommodate all reasonable requests.

- G. Treatment Options:** We may use and disclose your health information in order to inform you of alternative treatments.
- H. Release to Family/Friends:** Our health professionals, using their professional judgment, may disclose to a family member, other relative, close personal friend or any other person you identify, your health information to the extent it is relevant to that person's involvement in your care or payment related to your care. We will provide you with an opportunity to object to such a disclosure whenever we practicably can do so. We may disclose the health information of minor children to their parents or guardians unless such disclosure is otherwise prohibited by law.
- I. Health-Related Benefits and Services:** We may use and disclose health information to tell you about health-related benefits or services that may be of interest to you. In face-to-face communications, such as appointments with your physician, we may tell you about other products and services that may be of interest to you.
- J. Newsletters and Other Communications:** We may use your personal information in order to communicate to you via newsletters, mailings, or other means regarding treatment options, health related information, disease management programs, wellness programs, or other community based initiatives or activities in which our practice is participating.
- K. Disaster Relief:** We may disclose your health information in disaster relief situations where disaster relief organizations seek your health information to coordinate your care, or notify family and friends of your location and condition. We will provide you with an opportunity to agree or object to such a disclosure when we practicably can do so.
- L. Public Health Activities** We may disclose medical information about you for public health activities. These activities generally include the following:
- licensing and certification carried out by public health authorities;
 - prevention or control of disease, injury, or disability;
 - reports of births and deaths;
 - notifications to people who may have been exposed to a disease or may be at risk for contracting or spreading a disease or condition;
 - notifications to appropriate government authorities if we believe a patient has been the victim of abuse, neglect, or domestic violence. We will make this disclosure when required by law, or if you agree to the disclosure, or when authorized by law and in our professional judgment disclosure is required to prevent serious harm.
- M. Food and Drug Administration (FDA):** We may disclose to the FDA and other regulatory agencies of the federal and state government health information relating to adverse events with respect to food, supplements, products and product defects, or postmarketing monitoring information to enable product recalls, repairs, or replacement.

- N. Research:** We may disclose your health information to researchers when the information does not directly identify you as the source of the information or when a waiver has been issued by an institutional review board or a privacy board that has reviewed the research proposal and protocols for compliance with standards to ensure the privacy of your health information.
- O. Workers Compensation:** We may disclose your health information to the extent authorized by and to the extent necessary to comply with laws relating to workers compensation or other similar programs established by law.
- P. Law Enforcement:** We may release your health information:
- in response to a court order, subpoena, warrant, summons, or similar process if authorized under state or federal law;
 - to identify or locate a suspect, fugitive, material witness, or similar person;
 - about the victim of a crime if, under certain limited circumstances, we are unable to obtain the person's agreement;
 - about a death we believe may be the result of criminal conduct;
 - about criminal conduct at [name of provider];
 - to coroners or medical examiners;
 - in emergency circumstances to report a crime, the location of the crime or victims, or the identity, description, or location of the person who committed the crime;
 - to authorized federal officials for intelligence, counterintelligence, and other national security authorized by law; and
 - to authorized federal officials so they may conduct special investigations or provide protection to the President, other authorized persons, or foreign heads of state.
- Q. Personal Representative:** If you have a personal representative, such as a legal guardian, we will treat that person as if that person is you with respect to disclosures of your health information. If you become deceased, we may disclose health information to an executor or administrator of your estate to the extent that person is acting as your personal representative.
- R. HLTV-III Test:** If you perform the HLTV-III test on you (to determine if you have been exposed to HIV), we will not disclose the results of the test to anyone but you without your written consent unless otherwise required by law. We also will not disclose the fact that you have taken the test to anyone without your written consent unless otherwise required by law.
- S. Limited Data Set:** We may use and disclose a limited data set that does not contain specific readily identifiable information about you for research, public health, and health care operations. We may disseminate the limited data set unless we enter into a data use

agreement with the recipient in which the recipient agrees to limit the use of that data set to the purposes for which it was provided, ensure the security of the data, and not identify the information or use it to contact any individual.

3. Authorization of Other Uses of Medical Information

Uses of medical information not covered by our most current *Notice of Privacy Practices* or the laws that apply to us will be made only with your written authorization.

If you provide us with authorization to use or disclose medical information about you, you may revoke that authorization, in writing, at any time. If you revoke your authorization, we will no longer use or disclose medical information about you for the reasons covered by your written authorization, except to the extent that we have already taken action in reliance on your authorization or, if the authorization was obtained as a condition of obtaining insurance coverage and the insurer has the right to contest a claim or the insurance coverage itself. We are unable to take back any disclosures we have already made with your authorization, and we are required to retain our records of the care that we provided to you.

4. Your Health Information Rights

You have the following rights regarding medical information we gather about you:

A. Right to Obtain a Paper Copy of this Notice: You have the right to a paper copy of this *Notice of Privacy Practices* at any time. Even if you have agreed to receive this notice electronically, you are still entitled to a paper copy.

B. Right to Inspect and Copy: If you feel that medical information we have about you is incorrect or incomplete, you may ask us to amend the information. You have the right to request an amendment for as long as we retain the information.

To request an amendment, your request must be in writing and submitted to our privacy officer. In addition, you must provide a reason that supports your request.

We may deny your request for an amendment if it is not in writing or does not include a reason to support the request. In addition, we may deny your request if you ask us to amend information that:

- was not created by us, unless the person or entity that created the information is no longer available to make the amendment;
- is not part of the medical information kept by or for Framingham Podiatry; is not part of the information which you would be permitted to inspect or copy; or is accurate and complete.

If we deny your request for amendment, you may submit a statement of disagreement. We may reasonably limit the length of this statement. Your letter of disagreement will be included in your medical record, but we may also include a rebuttal statement.

D. Right to an Accounting of Disclosures: You have the right to request an accounting of disclosures of your health information made by us. In your accounting, we are not required to list certain disclosures, including:

- disclosures made for treatment, payment, and health care operations purposes or disclosures made incidental to treatment, payment, and health care operations;
- disclosures made pursuant to your authorization; disclosures made to create a limited data set; disclosures made directly to you.

To request an accounting of disclosures, you must submit your request in writing to our privacy officer. Your request must state a time period which may not be longer than six years and may not include dates before April 14, 2003. Your request should indicate in what form you would like the accounting of disclosures (for example, on paper). The first accounting of disclosures you request within any 12 month period will be free. For additional requests within the same period, we may charge you for the reasonable costs of providing the accounting of disclosures.

We will notify you of the costs involved and you may choose to withdraw or modify your request at that time, before any costs are incurred. Under limited circumstances mandated by federal and state law, we may temporarily deny your request for an accounting of disclosures.

E. Right to Request Restrictions: You have the right to request a restriction or limitation on the medical information we use or disclose about you for treatment, payment, or health care operations. You also have the right to request a limit on the medical information we communicate about you to someone who is involved in your care or the payment for your care.

We are not required to agree to your request. If we do agree, we will comply with your request unless the restricted information is needed to provide you with emergency treatment.

To request restrictions, you must make your request in writing to our policy officer. In your request, you must tell us:

- what information you want to limit;
- whether you want to limit our use, disclosure, or both; and
- to whom you want the limits to apply.

F. Right to Request Communications: You have the right to request that we communicate with you about medical matters in a certain way or at a certain location. For example, you can ask that we only contact you at work.

To request confidential communications, you must make your request in writing to our privacy officer. We will not ask you the reason for your request. We will accommodate all reasonable requests. Your request must specify how or where you wish to be contacted.

5. Complaints

If you believe your privacy rights have been violated, you may file a complaint with us or the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 200 Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, D.C. 20201. To file a complaint with us, contact our privacy officer at the address listed above. All complaints must be submitted in writing and should be submitted within 180 days of when you knew or should have known that the alleged violation occurred. See the Office for Civil Rights website, www.hhs.gov/ocr/hipaa/ for more information.

You will not be penalized for filing a complaint.